

HB 291 -- Missouri Standard Science Act

Sponsor: Brattin

This bill establishes the Missouri Standard Science Act which requires that science instruction in public elementary and secondary schools and in introductory science courses in public higher education institutions be standard science instruction as defined in the bill. Any empirical data, as defined in the bill, must have been verified, be capable of being verified, or be identified as nonverifiable. To present an item as a scientific law, as defined in the bill, the law must have no known exceptions in its verified empirical data. When scientific theory, as defined in the bill, is presented, the bill prescribes the level of detail required for the presentation of theories of origin and biological origin in teaching and textbooks. Textbooks covering any scientific theory of biological origin must devote equal treatment to evolution and intelligent design. Physical evidence must support the teaching of prehistory, and any conjecture about occurrence, causes, dates or lengths of time must be presented as theory or hypothesis, as defined in the bill. Naturalistic processes in prehistory must be duplicated by analogous naturalistic processes, as defined in the bill. False theories or hypotheses must be identified as false.

Existing elementary and secondary textbooks are exempt from the provisions of the bill. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education must negotiate with textbook publishers to ensure the availability of textbooks that meet the requirements of the bill at the earliest practical date. A temporary nine-member committee must be established to develop supplemental textbook material for the teaching of biological intelligent design for interim use within two years. Each member of the State Board of Education and the Commissioner of Education within the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education must appoint one person to the committee. Publishers of existing textbooks who certify that their textbooks meet the requirements of the bill will be added to the list of approved textbooks that the commissioner is required to maintain. Once a textbook is added to the list for a specific course, all new textbooks for that course must meet the bill's requirements within two years of the date of addition to the list. The commissioner must ensure that any assessment or competency testing of elementary and secondary students for academic performance conforms to the requirements of the bill within two years and that the test material must give equal treatment to theories of biological origin.